

# A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

**Earth Action Heroes protect the earth. Whether it's saving energy or guarding Bloomington's precious natural resources, these individuals are making a difference. Here are your neighbors in action ...**



## THE VALUE OF TREES ENERGY SAVINGS AND INCREASED PROPERTY VALUES

LANDSCAPE TREES IN MINNESOTA provide benefits that far exceed the cost of planting and care over their lifetime, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service research. Environmental and aesthetic benefits, such as energy savings, stormwater runoff reduction, cleaner air and higher property values, are an average three times greater than tree care costs.

**Energy savings:** Well-placed trees can help homeowners' save up to 30 percent on annual air-conditioning costs and 10 - 25 percent on winter heating costs.

**Higher property values:** Each large, front-yard tree adds 1 percent to a house sales price. Large trees can add 10 percent or more to property values.

To increase the number of trees on residential properties, the City holds a tree sale each spring. In 2006, approximately 180 trees were sold. The City also plants trees in parks and other public areas to ensure that Bloomington's urban forest continues to be one of the community's many treasures. For more information, call Paul Edwardson, 952-563-8762.

Source: USDA Forest Service

## FALL TREE CARE HELP TREES SURVIVE THE COLD

Prepare your trees for the winter by following these tips:

### Prune

September through March is a low-risk time to prune trees, especially elm and oak trees. No wound dressing is required.

### Water

A dry summer can stress trees so that they may be adversely affected by winter. Water trees slowly and deeply at the tree's drip line (where the leaves of the tree form the canopy) until the ground freezes.



### Mulch

Lay down a fresh layer of mulch to help maintain moisture and protect roots against extreme cold. Apply the mulch after a hard freeze so that the tree can become fully dormant and less susceptible to injury from the cold.

## EARTH ACTION HEROES THE POND PROTECTORS

JOHN AND JULIE HARKNESS ARE TWO OF 250 people, including a large industrial company, whose property surrounds Westhampton Pond in southwest Bloomington. The couple knows the pond increases property values and that residents like the birds, ducks and herons the pond attracts. The challenge is to get the many property owners to agree on the proper steps to improve the pond's water quality.

"Our main goal is to educate people in our association and surrounding landowners on the importance of



shoreline vegetation," John said. "We would like to be consistent with the City's guidelines of maintaining a 10- to 15-foot buffer zone around the entire pond."

Inspired by Earth Action Hero Kitty Taylor, who organized a water quality and landscaping seminar and water quality articles that appeared in the Briefing, John and Julie gathered their list of benefits of not mowing to the pond's edge.

"Native plants prevent erosion and reduce pond algae by filtering runoff," Julie said. "They also improve habitat for wildlife, block geese from walking on the lawn and are naturally beautiful."

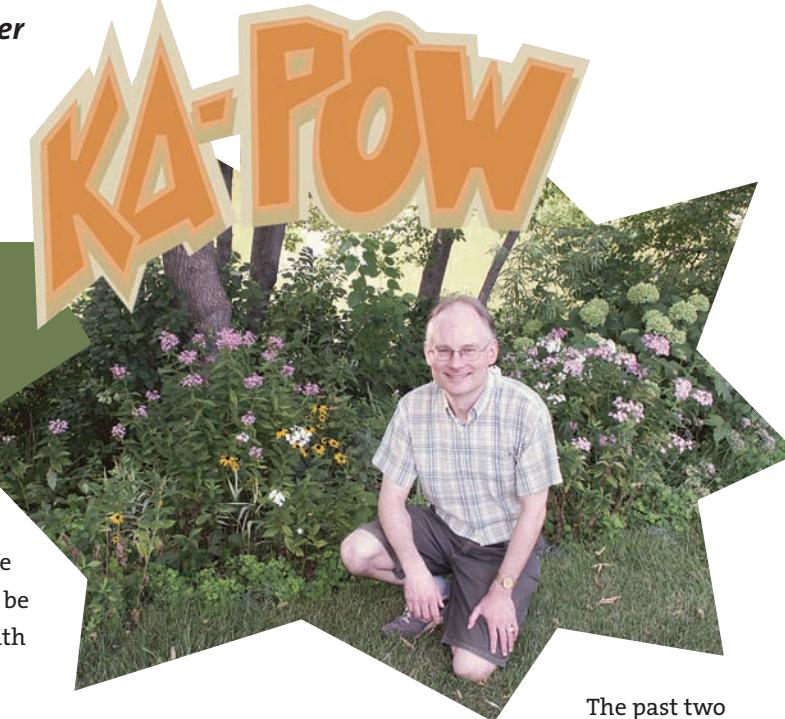
John and Julie worked with the City's Public Works and Environmental Health staff to find out about the pond's history and developed a personalized educational brochure to hand out to neighboring associations. They also presented the benefits of maintaining a buffer zone to their townhome's board.

The past two years have shown some positive results. The Westhampton Townhome Association joined the City's Adopt-a-Wetland program and the board approved a no-mowing policy along the edge of the pond that has allowed vegetation to grow.

"If we cut down all the trees and vegetation there will be no wildlife to enjoy," John said. "And that's what we love about the pond."

John said most people want to act, they just don't know what they can do. He believes in thinking globally and acting locally.

"This is something we can do right where we live. Our pond is a great amenity and we want to protect it," he said. "If everyone took care of their own backyard, we would be better off."



## DON'T FEED WATERFOWL WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FEEDING BIRDS

PEOPLE OFTEN FEED GULLS, GESE OR DUCKS AT LOCAL BEACHES AND PONDS. WHAT they do not realize is that feeding these animals is detrimental to the birds and the environment. For all waterfowl, the abundance of naturally occurring food and the quality of their diets are the driving forces behind the birds' ability to survive.

### FIVE REASONS NOT TO FEED WATERFOWL



#### Dependency

Hand feeding can cause large numbers of birds to congregate in areas that are incapable of supporting them. Birds become dependent upon humans for food, which can cause aggressive behavior, overpopulation around small wetlands and ponds, and delay migration to natural wintering sites.

#### Malnutrition

The food that people typically hand feed to birds, such as bread and crackers, doesn't provide the necessary energy and nutrients for proper health. Malnutrition leads to muscle deterioration, deformed wings in young birds, decrease in successful reproduction and lower life expectancy.

#### Disease

Malnourishment and overpopulation allow disease to spread more quickly, potentially infecting thousands of birds with fatal diseases. The risks increase when bird populations become concentrated at feeding sites.



#### Environmental degradation

Waterfowl naturally congregate in wetlands where natural foods are plentiful. However, hand feeding attracts large numbers of birds that may ultimately cause overgrazing and

degradation to the landscape, making it undesirable for other species and unsightly for humans.

#### Human health risks

Feeding waterfowl at the pond or beach significantly contributes to poor water quality in the form of fecal coliform bacteria. High levels of this bacteria can sicken beachgoers, close Bush Lake Beach and affect the recreational use of our local waters.



For more information on waterfowl management, call Park Maintenance at 952-563-8760.